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Newfoundland Labrador

Education
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Minister Highlights Importance of Education and Key Education Initiatives

A solid education system is the vehicle that will carry us to success. This is the message the Honourable Joan Burke, Minister of Education, is bringing to teachers and students as the province gears up to celebrate Education Week.

"The importance of education cannot be exaggerated. All our success, both individual and as a province, depends on it," said Minister Burke. "This year, the Provincial Government has allocated more than $1 billion for education. This money has funded a whole array of improvements in our schools. We want our classrooms to be places that prepare all our students to succeed, no matter what path a student may choose."

Minister Burke kicked off Education Week at St. Mary's Elementary in St. John's today. The theme for this year's Education Week is *Learn... Respect... Grow*. Minister Burke congratulated the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association for choosing a theme that highlights respect as an important part of learning and development.

The minister was pleased to learn that St. Mary's focused on respect on day one of Education Week. Respect and safety are important parts of the *Safe and Caring Schools* policy, one of the many initiatives undertaken in the education system in recent years. She said that since 2004, $111 million has been allocated for major maintenance and construction. Millions has been spent in such diverse areas as skilled trades, science laboratories and phys ed equipment. The financial burden of sending children to school has been reduced with the elimination of school fees and the provision of free high school textbooks. And the constant upgrading of the education system is on-going with significant reviews of teacher allocations, the ISSP program, the intermediate program and the math curriculum, that will have major implications for the education system.

"With the education and opportunities we are providing, students can go anywhere and be anything," said Minister Burke, "The good news is that there are tremendous opportunities in this province in exciting, developing fields, such as the oil and gas industry, the mining industry and eco-tourism. There are also great opportunities in the skilled trades. The Provincial Government is working to ensure we're creating a skilled labour force. We need an education and training system that will be able to meet the demands of industry and to grow our economy."

The minister stressed that there are a lot of success stories coming out of classrooms and schools. "The high calibre of our education system is evident by the many students who have gone on to be leaders in so many areas. Our students are being offered scholarships, going onto post-secondary education, and becoming the innovators and achievers who are contributing to our province's success. If you look around, you can see that most success stories in this province had their roots in the provincial education system," said the minister.

This year's Education Week ceremonies at Mountain Feild Academy are being recorded by the Department of Education's Centre for Distance Learning and Innovation and will be broadcast via the Internet at a later date.

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